



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

FINE AND INDUSTRIAL ART IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS. GRADE I

WALTER SARGENT
The University of Chicago

An effective plan of teaching the fine and industrial arts in elementary schools must consider not only the topics to be presented but also the age when each phase can be assimilated with greatest economy of effort and prove of highest value. Often things which come first in a logically arranged course based on a series of exercises which continually increase in difficulty can be taught to small children only at great expense of time and effort. A few years later these same things can be apprehended with great ease and the principles involved be put to immediate practical application. On the other hand, ways of working that seem from an adult standpoint to lead less directly to the desired result, or even away from it, but ways in which children persist, often prove to be the best foundation for efficiency. Careful observation is necessary in order to discern among children's peculiar ways of working what are faults to be overcome and what are hints of the best method of procedure.

Many courses in the arts lay strong emphasis on the importance of developing originality during the first two or three years in school. In order to avoid any opportunity for imitation, teachers are often advised not to draw for the children or furnish them with examples of design which they may follow, lest they copy and thus fall into the use of conventions. In constructive work this precaution against allowing children to shape their work after a given pattern is not so strongly urged. In representation and design, however, this attempt to safeguard individuality by eliminating suggestive examples during the first few years is so common, that any discussion of the course for the first school year must consider the proper scope for the originality of small children and the question whether, at an age when children are

making progress in other lines mainly by imitation that stimulus is not also the most important factor in advance in the arts.

Many of the opinions brought forward in favor of leaving very young children to take their first steps in drawing from objects, without that help which consists in showing them how by drawing for and with them lose force when full significance is given to the frequently repeated statement that drawing is a language. Its symbols are the result of evolution, the embodiment of observations of generations. Unless one is familiar with the drawing of various peoples in different centuries, he is likely to accept the graphic methods with which he is familiar as matters of course and to regard them as the only reasonable way of representing objects, a way which the object itself will suggest to small children.

The nature of graphic language and that of speech are not identical but are more alike than appears at first thought. To teach a child by example how to draw a few things so he may know the way in which others do it, is to give him a developed medium for expressing his own ideas, which is a more potent impetus to individuality than can come when he is compelled to find his own symbols for expression. Those which he invents or which are suggested to him by the objects he is drawing, if left without enrichment from other sources seldom develop beyond a meager set of crude conventions which he repeats over and again. He is not brought early into contact with those graphic interpretations which the race has worked out.

There would appear to be abundant and appropriate scope for the exercise of early original activity in employing an accepted and rich medium of expression in an original way. In any line the surest path to one's own originality is often through familiarity with the good ways of several other personalities.

In the teaching of design also, a subject which should exert a direct influence in developing good taste, a strong plea is made in many courses in the arts for fostering originality on the part of primary children by protecting them from opportunities for imitation. This article, however, does not hesitate to recommend familiarity with well-selected examples of design, and

opportunity to imitate them as a direct influence in developing originality, and as the best introduction to the study and practice of design. It is probably true that familiarity with and discrimination of what is excellent is a much more valuable asset than ability to produce what did not exist before if it is not good enough to be in itself a reason why it should exist at all.

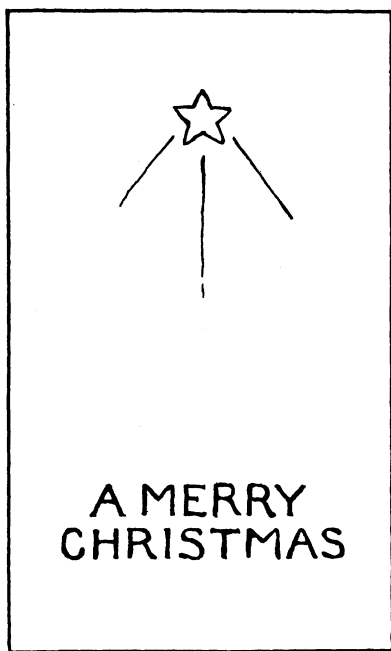


FIG. 1

For example, if a child in the first year in school is to make his first design, and it is to be a Christmas souvenir, consisting of a star pasted on a card and a greeting written or printed underneath (Fig. 1), the problem may be made one of original and unaided arrangement, or of following the suggestion and example of the teacher as he makes and thus leads the child by imitation to make an arrangement which is excellent in the consistent relation of its spaces and the beauty of its proportions.

In the first case the child may produce something original in the sense that it is a chance concoction of shapes that never

happened before. Such a result, however, is not necessarily a design because it is original. Good design is not the chance output of an uninformed mind. It implies a clear understanding of the function, the form and the materials of the object, so that the result may be an adequate and graceful fulfilment of its purpose. It implies also a sensitiveness to fine proportions and good spacing in order that the object may be a source of pleasure to the eye.

Ability to produce good designs unaided is not often within the power of immature minds. Children who with no example or suggestion, have made an original arrangement generally like it because it is their own production. A commonplace result is fixed in their minds and influences their next attempts.

The beauty of the Christmas souvenir just referred to depends largely on the spacing of the parts. The relations of spaces which are "good" are so because they give pleasure to a discerning eye. This pleasure appears to be dependent upon spacing which results in consistently related measures. It is not an individual whim or passing preference, but depends upon conditions which may be defined, although allowing within their limits abundant play for individuality, in conforming to these conditions in an original manner.

Final appreciation is better developed and originality is enabled the sooner to exercise itself if children are acquainted with good types from the first, and are not left to fix in mind the impressions of their own chance productions, so difficult to dislodge. Because these types are conventions is not necessarily a reason for avoiding them. They are results people have arrived at by long experimentation. The most rapid progress in original design comes by furnishing original minds with the best that has been done in order that they may start from that vantage point.

Under any circumstances of instruction, originality in design will be evident in only a few persons. For one who makes designs, a hundred must select and use those produced by others. Therefore it is of great importance that standards of excellence be established, and that children produce their first designs under the stimulus of excellent examples. This emphasis of the value

of imitation as a means of developing ability to represent and of awakening and guiding ideas of design should not be interpreted as a recommendation that children be left to copy finished results, but that they be allowed to work with and imitate the methods of a skilful instructor.

The following work in representation, construction, and design is recommended as appropriate for children during the first year in school.

Representation.—This should consist in the drawing of things of interest to the children, with much encouragement and little criticism from the teacher.

The first interest children show in using a pencil seems to be awakened by the pleasure of making marks with it, regardless of any significance in the marks themselves. They will cover one sheet of paper after another with meaningless scrawls and apparently be delighted by the fact that movements of the pencil over the paper leave visible marks in their path. This period has been termed the "scribble stage."

By degrees the marks take on significance. Interest in representing things is added to interest in mere scribbling. When children enter school they are usually just emerging from the scribbling stage and are beginning the use of forms somewhat as hieroglyphics in a sort of picture writing.

At this time children show little interest in representing a particular object placed before them. Passy thus describes the attitude of a primary child toward a model given him to draw :

He does not hesitate but seizes his pencil and draws rapidly in an automatic manner. It is impossible to make him look at his model with any attention. If any one commands him to look at it, he hurriedly casts upon it a distracted and disdainful glance and continues without concerning himself with that which he sees. The moment he has finished he shows it to you with a triumphant air.¹

At first children are interested in depicting by crude symbols the ideas which things suggest, rather than the correct appearance of the things themselves. They draw what they know about objects, rather than what their eyes see at any given moment.

¹ Quoted by Frederick Burk in "The Genetic vs. the Logical Order in Drawing," *Pedagogical Seminary* (1902), p. 296.

For example, they will show both ends of a house in the same drawing, and will sketch not only the exterior, but, if allowed time, will add the furniture and people inside, as if the walls were transparent (Figs. 2 and 3). They are very ready to draw pictures representing their games and home occupations, street

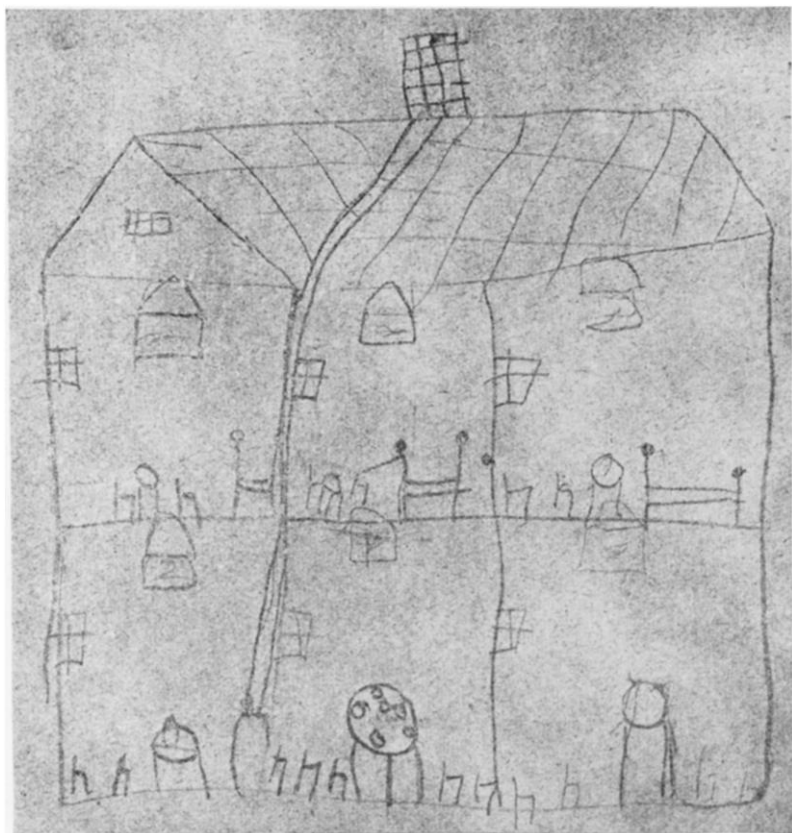


FIG. 2

scenes, and any incidents or objects with which they are familiar, or which make vivid impressions upon their minds. The drawings thus made are crude, and often meaningless to an adult, but not to the child who made them. He has a reason for every mark.

The temptation sometimes arises to substitute for such apparently complex topics a logically progressive arrangement of type

forms and geometric figure. In reality, however, a bird's nest is simpler for a child to draw than a hemisphere, and a locomotive than a cylinder. Wise teachers frankly accept this stage of crude drawing as a period which has its own value, and which should be given free exercise while it lasts. The nature of its value should be clearly understood. It consists primarily in the formation of a habit of ready graphic expression of ideas, to which can later be added training in correct delineation.



FIG. 3

Ability to record observations correctly can be developed subsequently with much less expenditure of time and effort, but facility of graphic expression comes most readily during these early years, and is difficult to obtain later. During the first year or two of school life, the acquisition in drawing which is of greatest advantage to the next stage of the work is this facility which a child gains by drawing in his own way with encouragement and example, but little criticism by the teacher. He needs continual use of this primitive picture language in describing things associated with home, out-of-door, and school life. Thus, expression by drawing becomes a habit before the age of self-consciousness and hesitation is reached. Illustrative drawing, as it develops, has a double value. It cultivates both the imagination and the power of expression. Imagination is founded on

memory. To represent by lines an image existing in the mind is to force that image to its utmost clearness, thus strengthening, as few other exercises can, the power to visualize.

Construction work.—The first steps in construction should be made with easily manipulated material. The problems should be such that complicated planning and prolonged processes of construction are unnecessary. Results should be quickly evident from the effects.

The sand table offers great possibilities for constructive work. The sand is readily shaped to represent various configurations of land and on these, with easily shaped materials, different locations and occupations may be represented.

Modeling in clay or other plastic material is an occupation which commands strong and long-sustained interest. Both hands are required to shape the responsive material into the desired form, and every touch makes an evident modification.

The work in modeling may well parallel that in drawing. When the hands have shaped forms so they are complete in their three dimensions, the next step of representing three dimensions in terms of only two is more easily taken. Modeling has not been so universally adopted as its value would seem to justify, largely on account of the difficulty of caring for the materials. It is, however, one of the most important modes of manual expression in primary grades.

Cutting pictures and other given shapes from paper gives valuable training in using a common implement to shape material to a predetermined form. It develops control over a tool and at the same time clarifies spatial images and is an important part of manual work in primary grades. Practice in paper cutting of pictures and given forms results in marked progress in ability to control the hand so as to follow an outline. The effect upon the power to image form clearly is seen in added vigor in drawing with pencil and also in representing objects in silhouette by free-hand paper cutting (Fig. 4 and 5).

Accuracy in measurement should not be expected from small children but first steps in handling a rule may be taken by using it as a means of drawing a straight line between two points.

Toward the end of the year some simple measurements which do not involve fractions of inches may be undertaken with profit.

Building with blocks is a type of constructive work which is of great value for small children. By matching the blocks together and selecting those which fit they learn to estimate form with some degree of precision. By placing one block upon another so the structure stands firmly, they gain a sense of horizontal and vertical relations.

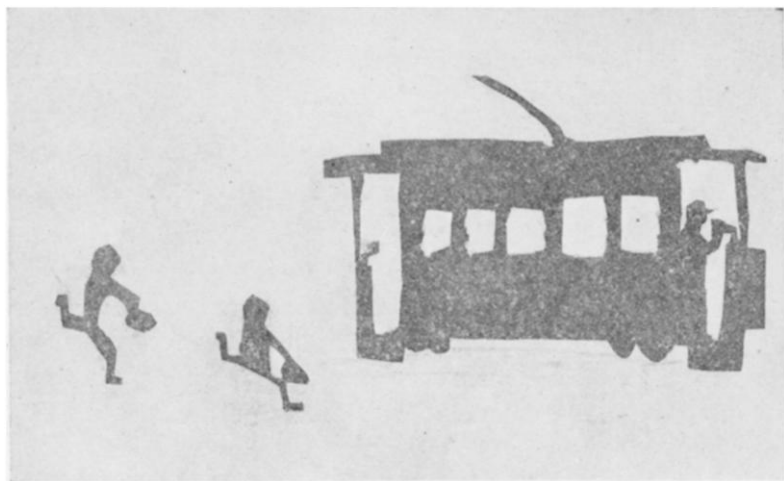


FIG. 4

Design.—Two lines of work in design should begin in the lower grades and be evident throughout the course: first the designing of things to serve a particular and useful purpose; second, practice in the repeated drawing and spacing of units and shapes in order to gain facility in estimating space relations and to develop an appreciation of rhythmic intervals in spacing.

The first, involves consideration of the purpose of the object and how it may fulfil this most adequately, and judgment as to the finest proportions and most appropriate ornamentation. This phase appears incidentally in Grade I, in such simple designs as Thanksgiving souvenirs, Christmas cards, valentines, etc. The teacher should work out with the children designs which are simple and yet excellent, and thus accustom them to examples of

good arrangement which will influence the choice of the children when later they plan their own designs.

The second may consist of exercises in which the children repeat a simple unit at intervals approximately equal, but without previous measurement, so as to form a border. The units should be drawn in concert to rhythmic time which at first is counted by the teacher as in music, or indicated upon the piano.

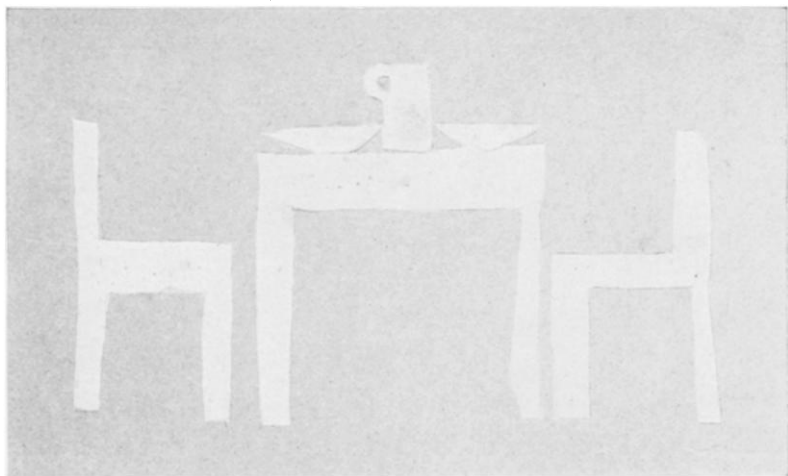


FIG. 5

This practice in repeating a series of forms to a corresponding movement of time gives a sense of rhythm which is not developed by drawing borders in which the spacing of the units is indicated either by dictated points or with the aid of measurements before the units are drawn (Fig. 6).

Exercises with these simple borders are the first steps toward more complicated work in upper grades, such as surface designs, bilateral forms, and balanced designs of abstract shapes, or conventionalized flower forms produced with a few pencil or brush strokes.

In this practice, as in penmanship, beautiful form and style are gained, not by pausing over one unit to perfect it, but by repeating the shape till the hand has mastered it and can use it with facility.

During the first year in school children should become familiar with the colors most easily recognized, such as red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet. This may be done by placing before the children a fairly large sample of one after another of these colors, and having them collect objects of a similar color. In bits of cloth and paper, and in flowers and leaves, the color under consideration will be discovered and its sensation perceived more clearly than by chance observation. The use of colored crayons and water colors for drawing is an important means of training recognition and discrimination of color.

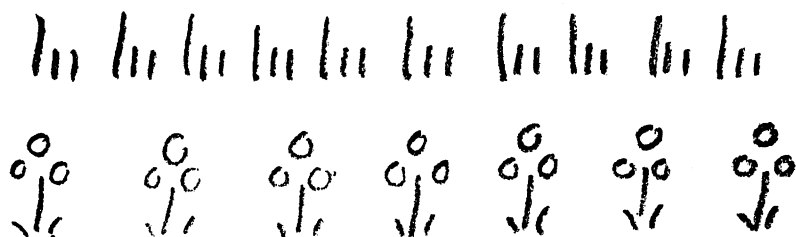


FIG. 6

A reasonable standard of accomplishment has been reached, if at the end of the first year in school the children have developed a habit of expressing their ideas with pencil so that drawing seems to them a matter of course, if they have gained ability to handle simple material such as paper, clay, sand, and blocks so that such materials assume desired shapes, and if they have gained some ideas of good spacing and arrangement under guidance of the teacher, and have begun to enjoy the rhythmic spacing of forms and to discover the general distinctions of color.

That their graphic expressions during this first year are crude and their constructions inaccurate when judged by adult ideas, and that their standards of good design are gained from their instructors, are not causes for apprehension.

The primary instructor who draws with and for the children and who constructs objects with them is furnishing the most potent stimulus and inspiration for progress toward individual ability. Compared with the effect of this, methods and courses without such example are of secondary value.